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S E R M O N

PREACHED

Thursday the Twenty-ninth of July, MDCCLXXXIV,

THE LATE DAY OF

NATIONAL THANKSGIVING,

TO A

Aggregation of Protestant-Dissenters,

In Saint-Saviour-Gate, York,

And published at the request of the Audience,

BY
NEWCOME CAPPE. K

Y O R K,

PRINTED BY A. WARD; AND SOLD BY J. JOHNSON,
IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON;
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS IN YORK.
MDCCLXXXIV.

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NATIONAL TRAMWAYS



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1861

PSALM XLIX. 6.

HE MAKETH WARS TO CEASE.

TRUE philosophy, as well as true religion, ascribes every thing to God. Without him nothing is or happens. "God spake and it was done." "Who is he that sayeth and it cometh to pass when the Lord commandeth it not?" In private life, if affliction visits us, it is with God's commission in her hand: if the gleams of prosperity shine upon our dwelling, they issue forth from the light of his countenance. In public life, if peace and tranquillity reign among the nations, it is the God of love that binds them to each other: if the flames of war are lighted up, it is the breath of God that kindles them: if the sword is sheathed again, and the voice of discord heard no more, it is God that hath reconciled their interests, and cooled their passions, and composed their animosities. "He maketh wars to cease."—How should it be otherwise? "The lot may be cast into the lap, but the disposal thereof is of the Lord." "The battle is not to the strong:" if God be with him the feeblest adversary is greater than all who are against him. "God taketh the wise in their own craftiness:" the fairest negotiations fail if his mediation be not in them. There is not in the universe a power or a circumstance, nor the disposition of a power or a circumstance, not a motion or a thought,
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but God knows them, controls them, actuates them: he gave being to every thing that led them on; he foresees and fore-appoints all their consequences and their issues. This is, in every page of them, the doctrine both of the Jewish and the Christian scriptures. From the position that there is a perfect Creator of the world there is not a more immediate or a more infallible deduction. It is a doctrine which no subtilties of criticism can erase from the sacred volume; which no oppositions of science, which no distinctions between certain and necessary, between power and will, between permission and appointment can expunge from the creed of Reason: a doctrine concerning which, I hope and pray that nothing may ever intercept from you the glorious views which it exhibits of the Creator's majesty and grandeur, or rob you of the everliving comfort it suggests in every scene and under every circumstance. Yes, Christians, all things are in the hands of God: we and ours: all men, and all the events in which any individual of his creation has an interest. God is the great agent of the universe, the source of all perception, the inspirer of all sentiments, the fountain of all power, the director and controler of all actions, the dispenser of all enjoyments and all sufferings, the arbiter and the decider of all occurrences and of all results. "He maketh wars to cease." "I am the Lord, says he, and there is none else: I form the light and create darkness, I make peace

peace and create evil, I, the Lord, do all these things."

Under the full conviction that this assertion of his own is true, in the late day of national transgression and calamity, you again and again humbled yourselves under the mighty hand of God; and to-day you have presented your thanksgivings to him as the restorer of tranquillity, and the author of your present peace and comfort. It is dutiful; for to whom are our thanksgivings owing but to him by whom the blessing is bestowed? It is decent; for how unseemly had it been to have importuned the deliverance, to have received it, neglected it and forgotten it? The due reception, the humble acknowledgement, the grateful remembrance, and the faithful improvement of the mercies which, at any time, are present with us, if not a title to the continuance and extension of those mercies, are at least *that* without which we have no title to peace of mind, and without which, whatever other comforts may attend us, the comforts of good conscience cannot be enjoyed.

To preserve you in the sentiments, which in the devotions of this day you have expressed, to establish in your minds a just sense of the obligations that you owe to God who maketh wars to cease, and a disposition to render to him all the honor which in this instance is due

unto his name, I might contrast the blessings of peace with the miseries of war : I might ask you which is better ; a state of quiet and security, or of agitation and alarm ? Which is better ; to beat the plow-shares and the pruning-hooks into swords and spears, or the weapons of war into implements of husbandry ? Which season is the most auspicious to the pursuits of Science, the improver of human nature and the adorning of human life ? Which is the most auspicious to the efforts of ingenuity and industry ; the calm, still, safe, and pleasant season of tranquillity and peace, or the hard, unsettled, tumultuous, and uncertain circumstances of war ? When is it that the poor man's liberty and life is most perfectly his own ; when is it that the rich man's property is most entirely at his disposal ; when navies *must* be manned, when armies *must* be filled, when war has increased the subjects and opportunities of speculation to numbers well-disposed to take them, at a time when though the channels by which private property is conveyed into the public treasury are continually multiplied and enlarged, yet the issues by which it is drained away are enlarged and multiplied beyond proportion ? When is it that the intercourses of friendship, of neighbourhoods, of families and houses are most securely and most comfortably enjoyed ; when the trumpet calls to battle, when the call is anxiously apprehended, when the combat is begun, when the issue is expected, when the list of those who have

have fallen in their country's service is looked at with misgiving hearts and fearful eyes, when the habits of our countrymen, of our acquaintance and connections tell us that their children have been bleeding on the plain, and that their hearts are still bleeding for them; is it in such seasons that society is best enjoyed? When is it that human life is most eligible; when the efforts of ourselves and of all around us, which were wont to be exerted for the improvement of our circumstances and the increase of our prosperity, have been called away from such objects to confine themselves merely to our safety? When is it that human nature is most amiable; when its talents and its vigor are exerted in the communications of hospitality and commerce mutually to help and serve, or, in the operations of war mutually to harass and destroy? Where is it that the human heart is bettered; where is it that it is depraved; amidst the reciprocal decorums and advantages of amicable society, or amidst the narrow-minded, selfish, angry, insolent, rapacious, cruel, and licentious passions, which war, and rumors of war, and scenes of war incourage and inspire? Is it good to sow in expectation that an enemy shall reap the produce, or burn up the field? Is it good to build in expectation that an enemy shall pull down? Is it good to plant, is it pleasant to look upon the shades that we have planted, while the hostile ax threatens to cut down the rising shoots, or to lay waste the scenes
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in which we have so long enjoyed ourselves? Where would you rather be; which would you rather look upon; the stately city, daily rearing up new monuments of its prosperous industry; or, beset on every side, attacked at every avenue, straitened in every necessary, distressed in every mode, here falling on its defenders and inhabitants, and there consuming in its flames the living together with the dead? Where would you rather be, which would you rather look upon; the peaceful village, its inhabitants going forth to their work and to their labor until evening; or, alarmed by the tumult of the battle, abandoning their unreaped fields to seek elsewhere a precarious existence, flying from their defenceless homes, and leaving behind them a silence and a solitude awful even to their invaders? of these different scenes which are they that your hearts delight in? which are they in the contemplation whereof they sink and die away within you?—In burning towns, in plundered villages, in wasted harvests, in the shrieks of the defenceless, in the groans of those who have fallen in their behalf, in the violence, the cruelty, and licentiousness which attend the steps of Victory, Humanity has no pleasure: she turns away from the savage spectacle, alike distressed for the sufferers whom she cannot protect, and their oppressors, who will not hear her.

War, you know, always has been called the scourge of God. It is among the severest instruments of divine discipline. It is classed with pestilence and famine, and by David pestilence was preferred before it. "Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, says he, for very great are his mercies, but let me not fall into the hands of men." The choice was wise, as for the reason specified, so for other reasons also. War, it is likely, would have brought pestilence and famine with it. Disease and Dearth are usually in her train. There are few scenes that Fancy cannot paint in darker colors and magnify beyond the life. War, however, is of these few. Born in this happy island, to which the ocean is a better barrier than walls of fire and brass, even when you are engaged in it, you know nought of war, but by its distant rumours and remoter consequences. You can form to yourselves no conception of the straits and hardships, the terrors and alarms, the anxieties and heart-achs, the numerous and complicated distresses, with which this Scourge of heaven overflows the countries through which she takes her course; much less of the severer ruin in which she overwhelms those whereon she directs her vengeance. War cannot *be* but somewhere these miseries must be: and shall we take no interest in the protraction or cessation of these miseries, because they are not miseries of our own? The heart that mourns not over the existence, or rejoices not in the extinction of such miseries

miserics is a Barbarian's not a Briton's, a monster's not a man's. Always calamitous to those who exact justice, as well as to those who refuse it, it often happens that, in some mode or other, the contention is alike ruinous to both. If God, in whose hands all powers and all hearts are, averts such ruin before it is fully come, if he causes such calamities to cease, is there nothing to rejoice in, nothing due to God, nothing to enkindle gratitude, nothing to excite to duty, to zealous chearful duty in a change like this? If peace be *not* a blessing war *is*. But is it usual to pray, is it usual to give thanks for impoverished treasuries, for suspended arts, for interrupted commerce, for diminished population, for burning navies, for bleeding armies, for ruin'd towns and desolated plains? Our supplications are for peace. It is peace and thanks that go together.—God is the God of peace, Christ is the prince of peace, Christians are the sons of peace, it is their delight to make it and their endeavor to enjoy it. To delight in war, to behold it with indifference, is to belie their character; their character as men and not as christians only, for who knows not that all men are brethren of one mighty family, or what man can want to be made feel “how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity?” Be it so that from the peculiar advantages of your insular situation you can sit secure, each of you under his own vine and his own fig-tree; be it so that amidst the
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ravages of war your cities bid defiance to those fiery deluges which reduce other towns to ashes ; be it so that while the human savage is elsewhere laying waste the works of God, your fruitful vallies still present to you their wonted beauties, and yield you their customary increase ; should this feed your insolence ? should this impair your sensibility ? should this dispose you to think with carelessness and indifference of those who have no such asylum from any such calamities ? should this enable you to look without regret on the desolation which your own arms have created in the earth ? should it cool your gratitude to heaven ? should it disqualify you to thank God that he hath preserved you from the wrath of others, and restrained the remainder of your own ?

War, even when it is just and prosperous, is an evil. The justification of it must be drawn from some superior evil which it promises to prevent or to remove : and yet it is an evil of such tremendous magnitude, so connected also with other evils of the greatest size, greater than which so rarely either infect or threaten the communities of mankind, that it is very seldom that war is either just in its principle, or politic in its prosecution. The history of all nations, in all ages, warrants the assertion. It is not the gratification of a keen though just resentment, it is not the towering projects of
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ambition, it is not the sinister policy that would strengthen and exalt itself by enfeebling and humiliating its competitors, it is not the establishment of this or the other individual or family in the supreme seat of government, it is not the aggrandizement of an empire, it is not the improvement of its prosperity, it is not the extension of its commerce, it is not the exaction of a revenue, it is not the recovery of a doubtful or an unimportant right, it is not the support of a customary, no, nor of a just authority, that can always warrant war; some of these things can in *no* circumstances warrant it, and none of them in *many*. What is it then by which war may be justified? Not by any pleas of truth; of the interest, propagation, honor, maintenance of truth, however sacred or important. Truth does not want the patronage of the sword; the sword cannot serve her, and she would disdain such service. It is the actual or the threatened violation of the great common rights of men by which war must be justified. When the sword is drawn against oppression, the cause is the cause of God.

If war then is such an evil that nothing but great injuries can justify it, such an evil that till every other means of redress have been applied, no injuries of *any* magnitude can justify it, if it is such an evil as every wise man would himself fly from, and as every humane man would ward off from every brother of the hu-

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man race, then certainly with whatever solicitude you shun this evil, with whatever earnestness you deprecate it, with so much gratitude to the author and preserver of it, should you acknowledge the continuance of peace, and with so much joy should you celebrate the restoration of it.

In all that has hitherto been said to you there is nothing peculiar to your present situation. It might have been said of any war, however qualified; whoever were the subjects or the objects of it, whatever were the occasion, the principle, the progress and the issue of it. But of *that* peace in which we are now rejoicing, we are especially directed, by high authority, to consider it as the termination of *a bloody, an extended and expensive war*; and we may be allowed to add, *in the opinion of many good men, unjust in its principle*; and *of many wise men, impolitic in its progress*; and also, *in respect of the object of it, unfortunate in its result*. In each of these considerations peculiar to the war the termination of which we are this day called to celebrate, you will find new cause of rejoicing in the providence of God, the composer of our quarrels, and the author of our tranquillity and comfort.

1. In the opinion of many good men the war was unjust. *They*, at least must rejoice and give thanks to God, in whose hands the hearts of all men are, that Britain hath laid down the vindictive sword, that she hath not gone on to

fill up the measure of her iniquities; but, shock'd at the reflection on her own conduct, or abash'd by the frowns of providence, hath said "It is enough". If they abhor the pollutions that have defiled the British sword, let them be glad that it contracts no more pollution, and, by the sacrifices of piety and humanity, let them do what can be done to expiate the blood that is upon it. It were good, it were matter for earnest importunity that even just wars should cease; how much more is it a subject of thanksgiving, to those who deem them such, that unjust wars are not protracted?

2. As there were many good men who held the war to be unjust, so there were many wise men who deemed it to be impolitic. If they did not condemn the principle of the war, in their view the object of it was impracticable; or if not absolutely impracticable, yet undesirable. It must have been acquired at a price which it was not worth, must have been retained by means which it could not justify, and must have degenerated into a severe dominion, precarious, unprofitable and uncomfortable, over jealous and malignant subjects; the effects of which would have been misery and tumult on *that* side the Atlantic, and the depression and decline both of the power and the spirit of liberty on *this*.

"The quarrel, it has been thought, might have been prevented that it should not have broken out:

out: it has been thought that it might have been accommodated that it should not have continued: it might also have continued still, to complete the ruin into which it was hastening to overwhelm us. Who then should not be thankful that it has ceased?—In that which is not wise, even late dereliction is better than fatal perseverance. In that which is not good, disappointment is better than success. Even dear-bought wisdom is more to be desired than incorrigible or even than uncorrected folly. If your children or your friends have abandoned their vain and ruinous pursuits; whether it be wisdom that has disposed them, or weakness that has obliged them, or control that has compelled them, you rejoice, and you rejoice justly, that they have abandoned their vain and ruinous pursuits.

3. It was a bloody war. Civil wars are usually bloody wars. They seldom rise but upon great occasions to decide important interests. The ties of blood, the bonds of friendship, many common interests, numerous and substantial services, much former pleasing and advantageous intercourse are by each side forgotten as to the obligations they infer, but remembered as to the demands they ground. The ideas of insensibility, dissingenuity, ingratitude, unnaturalness, all present themselves to aggravate the guilt and the demerit which enmity against ourselves, in any circumstance, is conceived

conceived to carry in it, and thus to exhibit the contending parties to each other as unfaithful and unworthy, to preclude reconciliation and enflame resentment, and to check those condescensions and relentings by which the quarrels of aliens and strangers might have been mitigated and composed. They are pungent words, and they express ardent feelings, *It was not an enemy, then I could have borne it: but it was thou mine equal, my guide and my acquaintance—let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into the grave, for wickedness is in their dwelling and among them.* Such sentiments are too natural to such occasions. The ideas may not shew themselves distinctly in the understanding, yet, notwithstanding this, they will have their influence upon the heart, and will contribute to exasperate the dissensions that arise among friends and brethren. Such flames once kindled have seldom been extinguished but by deluges of blood.

It is not needful that I should be at any pains to authenticate this character of that war in the cessation of which we are now rejoicing: it is affirmed by the first authority, which was under no obligation to avow it, and to which the truth could not be unknown. If I could, I would not take you to the field which Brethren's hands have strewed with British carcases: if I could, I would not aid you to imagine the tumults, groans, and stillness which succeeded each other there: I would not help
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you to depicture to yourselves the various miseries that diversified the field of blood : I would not tell you how they died there, with what prayers, and wishes, and regrets. With those whose blood was spilt I would not reckon up to you those also whose hearts were broken. The execution of the battle is not in the field only : those who take the sword may perish by the sword, and besides these, the battle kills its thousands whom the sword never touches but in those they love. Its sharpest and perhaps its most devouring weapons are anxiety and grief.—But let me leave these tales untold. The old man's narrative, the patriot's monument, the labourer's plough will often be renewing these distresses. In future times the Biographer, of both countries, will relate them with affliction and with wonder : and the Moralist, of both countries, when he would agitate or melt, or meliorate the heart, will fetch his story, not from Grecian fables or from Roman legends, but from real personages and real scenes ; from the adventures, the difficulties, the dangers, the distresses, the feelings and affections of American and British brethren.—Hereafter the bloodshed may do good. It may prevent future desolations : it may cement future friendships : it may mend the human character : it *will* help on the counsels of the God of love. The *present* impressions of it are not pleasant. Looking on the purpled ocean and the ensanguin'd plain, we regret what cannot be

be undone, and ought therefore to be thankful that now nothing more is doing to augment and multiply those regrets. The greater the fury and the mischief of the storm, naturally the more welcome and the more joyful is the return of serenity and peace.

4. The war was an extended war. I need not tell you over how wide a sea, through what a range of coast, to what a length of time, and to what a host of enemies it was extended. The farther this destroying Monster hath diffused his ravages and menaces, and the longer he has gone about seeking whom he may devour, the more there are to rejoice and to be rejoiced with, that through the blessing of almighty God, the humanity of mankind hath at length found the means to bind him. The shores of either continent have long ago been resounding with the praises of the God of peace. Britain, though late, is not, I hope, least cordial in her thanksgivings. The principal desolation was among her children and her brethren. If she did not lead the song she takes it up, and I trust she will not let it languish; for how pleasant is the view, when the horrors that were brooding over half the earth are clearing off from the face of nature, and the nations are uniting, or succeeding one another, in the hymn of praise to God who maketh wars to cease, and who hath promised to those who love him, that all things shall work together for their good!

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5. The war was an expensive war, and here is another reason to rejoice in the cessation of it. Economy is as necessary to the stability and prosperity of national affairs as of domestic ones. Vain profusion entails on both, uncomfortable, disgraceful, dangerous difficulties, and in the end perhaps irreparable ruin. When the expenditure of a nation is continually surpassing its permanent resources, and thus drying up the fountains of its wealth; its impositions must bear hard on the great body of the community, must be unfavourable to the ornament, unfavourable to the comfort of life, injurious to arts, manufactures, commerce, population, to every thing in which national prosperity and strength consists. In such circumstances, all those internal achievements by which the condition of its own subjects might be improved, and all those external enterprizes by which a valuable influence and an honorable pre-eminence among the nations might be gained, are out of reach. Unless means of redemption can be found, such a nation must go on sinking and still sinking till it becomes unequal to the maintenance of its honor, to the fulfilment of its engagements, and even to its defence. Was Britain tottering on the brink of such destruction? Had the ebbing tide already placed her on the precipice when the hand of Peace arrested her? Methinks even her enemies would have shed a tear upon her ruins, and shall not her own sons rejoice in her deliverance? How welcome

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come is the voice of Peace when she saves from ruin, though of its own devising, a free-born nation, heretofore the refuge of the oppressed and the persecuted, the friend, the patron, advocate, protector, guardian, champion of the common rights of men ! As much as it behoves you to be thankful that you are not yet reduced to the simple necessities of life; as much as it behoves you to be thankful that you still have whereof to give unto him that needeth; as much as it behoves you to be thankful that you still enjoy, and have the hope of enjoying, the blessings by which Britons are distinguished, so much it behoves you from a principle of gratitude to God, patiently to acquiesce in the resumptions he has made upon you, chearfully to submit to the burdens that he has imposed, and with one heart and voice to praise him that he has given you some tokens of his returning kindness, in that he hath caused wars to cease, and hath not commissioned destruction to make an utter end.—Stay ye that catastrophe.—Thanksgiving cannot stay it.—Gratitude may do more ; for gratitude to God is an active principle of pure and universal virtue. If ye love God, your obligations to *him* that he hath dropped the uplifted scourge ; if ye love your country, your attachments to *her* interests, should prompt you to better sacrifices than the sacrifices of praise merely, and of thanksgiving. Your acceptance with your Maker, your intercessions for yourselves and also for your country,

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will find their truest recommendation and their best support in your sincere endeavours to preserve yourselves, and to recover all you may, from that carelessness, insensibility, dissipation, luxury, licentiousness, want of principle, known, deliberate, and avowed contravention of principle that are naturally operating the ruin of this country and shutting out every hope from the all-controlling providence of God.

Again, in the last place, I may add that the war was unfortunate. Its object was not attained, and there never was any progress towards the attainment of it. Shall we not rejoice then that it is deserted? From the beginning, it would seem, that the eye which was not very penetrating might have foreseen that no good end would come of it. But if it should be conceded that Prudence did not frown upon it from the first, Providence however never ceased to frown upon it. What a cause of joy is it, what heart-breath'd praise does it not demand that Britain is no longer fighting against God?

Unfortunate, however, as to its object, it may be fortunate in its issues. The upshot of war is not a single, insulated event, bearing no connections, and leading on no consequences. *What* the consequences are we cannot prophecy; but we can hope. What God is, and what his perpetual employment is, we know, and we know that without him nothing comes to pass.

Why may it not be good for Britain, gradually detached both from the Western and the Eastern world, to confine her attention to her own fields and seas? Let either the wisdom of man, or the wrath of heaven, in some mode or other, suppress the luxury that renders such connections useful, that renders such connections necessary; and from that moment they will have become, of necessary superfluous, and of useful noxious. Without them, being a better, we might also be a happier people.

Why should it not be good, on what ground stands the doubt that it is good for her, that America should be governed by her own people and her own laws? Whoever is at all acquainted with the principles of the human nature, or the history of the human kind, cannot hesitate a moment to confess that, in respect of all the most valuable interests of men, *many* governments are far preferable to *few*. In wide-extended empires the strain of law, in respect both of its requisitions and its sanctions, must be severe, and the execution of it must be rigorous; and yet, notwithstanding this, no severity of the one, and no rigor of the other, can preserve the distant regions of the empire from anarchies, usurpations, tumults, violences, oppressions, and disorders of every kind. The natural consequence of such inevitable disorders abroad, will be jealousies at home; and when rebellion abroad and suspicion at home decide the

the temper of the government, what must be the character, the condition, and the expectations of the subjects?

To conclude. While with so much reason as you have seen, you stand in the divine presence giving thanks to him who maketh wars to cease, prefer your prayers also to the same propitious Being for the perpetuity of the peace of Britain. "May they prosper who love her: may peace be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces."—But though the ocean constitutes the barrier of Britain, let it not confine the good affections, or limit the good wishes of her children. Let all men have a share in them. All men have a right to the blessings of equal law, and well-established liberty. You, I know, will cordially congratulate those who have obtained these blessings, and enjoy them; and I have not a doubt that your hearts will go every length with mine in behalf of the whole family of God, by whatever seas or mountains bounded, by whatever names or characters distinguished, beseeching him that, "He, the God of peace himself, will give us peace always, by all means."

T H E E N D.

Published by the same Author,

THREE SERMONS

On the Fast-Days 1776, 1780, and 1781.

